

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Alexander, "in a moment I shall hypnotize the young lady before you, and while under my hypnotic spell she will play upon this piano continuously, without a pause, from now until the opening of our exhibition to-night—a period of eight hours."

Brand gripped my arm and smothered a curse.

"Now, it must be evident to you," continued the speaker, "that such a feat as this would be absolutely impossible, under normal conditions, to a slender, delicate young woman such as you see this one to be. In fact, I am credibly informed that in professional endurance contests no male pianists have ever played for a period exceeding six hours. Yet, to show you the marvelous influence of mind over matter, when the mind is properly focused and directed, this young lady will not only play two hours beyond the world's record, but will do it without fatigue."

"To prove this, she will appear upon the stage to-night in her wonderful telepathic act, and will be as fresh as if she had spent these intervening hours in sleep. And let me explain to you once more—for it is a matter of popular misapprehension—that a person in a hypnotic sleep need not have his eyes closed. That is optional with the operator. But when the subject's eyes are open he or she sees only what the operator suggests."

He paused, and Vivian took her place at the piano, on an ordinary round piano-stool. I shuddered at the thought of her sitting there, without any support for her back, for eight hours.

Alexander made a few perfunctory passes of his hands before her eyes, saying quietly, yet with subtle intensity: "Sleep! Sleep! Already you are drowsy, very drowsy. You are asleep. Open your eyes. Now, when I give you the word, I want you to play upon this piano until I command you to stop. Remember that you will suffer no fatigue: The singing birds of this beautiful garden that you see about you, the flowers, the splashing fountains, the cooling breezes, will continually renew your strength." He paused, fixed the crowd with his domineering eye, and gave the command: "Play!"

AT the word her hands struck the keys. Cut-and-dry as you will, gentlemen, in the desiccating atmosphere of science, there is something profoundly impressive about this hypnotism. Vivian had obviously passed, as her master predicted, into an enchanted sphere, leaving behind the gaping crowd, the heat, her weariness, all the squalid accessories of her life. Her face was like one rapt by a beautiful vision. Her pupils were dilated, as if by belladonna, and there was a fixity about her eyes that was incompatible with sight.

Well, we now had legal evidence of a public exhibition which might justly be considered as detrimental to public morals. Our next step was to have it restrained. We called upon the city attorney, the chief of police, and the mayor, one after the other. The city attorney pleaded no jurisdiction; the chief, a burly brute, denounced us as kill-joys; the mayor was polite but regretful.

All these officials were found within a block of the theater. Doors and windows were wide open on account of the heat, and throughout our several interviews the notes of that piano drifted to our ears. To me they were as sad as the dirge of a lost soul. They must have driven Brand crazy.

We returned aimlessly to the theater, and stood on the sidewalk a moment. Suddenly Wallace advanced to the piano and, laying his hand upon Vivian's shoulder, said earnestly:

"Vivian, wake up! This is no place for you. It is Wallace speaking. I want you

to come away with me. Wake up! Stop playing!"

He might as well have spoken to an automaton. Her fingers never faltered. She did not miss a note. No change of expression took place. Her eyes never wavered in their sightless stare.

Alexander now appeared from inside. He seemed rather pleased than otherwise at the incident, and stood back with a confident, sardonic smile.

"An old friend of hers, I take it," said he amiably. "In that case, she should recognize your voice. Stop her if you can. If I'm a fake, prove it to the crowd. Tell her the theater is on fire. Tell her that her mother is dead. Lift her hands from the keyboard and close the lid."

Brand acted on the last injunction. The music stopped, but not her hands. They moved up and down the soundless piece of wood. The spectators laughed. Alexander, with a mocking bow to Brand, raised the lid again, and once more the clang of the ancient instrument mingled with the noises of the street.

I half expected Wallace to knock the hypnotist down, but after a moment he returned to my side.

"There seems nothing else to do," said he. Glancing at his watch, he added:

"Alexander," said Brand, "I want you to wake that girl."

Everybody except Alexander laughed. Alexander was a judge of human nature; he scented peril, and, stepping behind a table, drew a revolver.

"I'm running this show, sir," he answered. "Leave the stage and the house or I'll call an officer."

Brand advanced a step,—he had not drawn his pistol,—and Alexander opened fire. One bullet entered Wally's left shoulder. Wally then drew his own gun and shot the hypnotist through the heart.

ASKED on the witness-stand why he, a member of a revolver club and an expert shot, allowed his antagonist to jeopardize his life, Brand answered that he was afraid if he killed Alexander it would be impossible to wake Vivian. This was in his mind as he stood over the body of his victim, for he turned to Alexander's assistants, who, frozen with terror, still stood in a line, and asked:

"Are any of you familiar enough with this man's methods to wake the young woman at the piano?"

"I think I can," spoke up a tall, loose-jointed fellow with twitching brows. "For fear something should happen to him, Mr.

"Listen, Vivian," said Brand. "There will be no show. Alexander is dead. I have killed him. He will never hypnotize you again."

She gazed at him fixedly for a moment before recognition dawned in her eyes. For the first time in the whole incident, Brand told me, his heart quickened. Then she buried her face in her hands and began to weep. He would have taken her in his arms then and there; but a policeman stepped forward at that instant and snapped a pair of bracelets on his wrists.

In court Brand pleaded not guilty in order to bring out the facts. The witnesses, including Vivian and himself, told essentially the same story. Judge Thomas sentenced him to fourteen years in the penitentiary, which good behavior would commute to ten. It was an outrageous sentence, in my opinion, and I took occasion to tell Thomas so. Wally was clearly crazed by the abuse and degradation of the woman he loved. Governor Porter, in pardoning him, declared his adherence to this view.

JUDGE CROWE ceased speaking, and again averted his eyes to the motionless leaves of the soft maple outside the window. For a moment his listeners were silent.

"A very interesting and tragic story, Judge," observed one of the attorneys. "But I should like to hear what became of poor Vivian."

"That I can't tell you. I have never seen or heard of her since the trial. She disappeared abruptly after giving her testimony. And now, gentlemen," he added, glancing at his watch, "if you will excuse me, I'll drive down to the station to welcome home this same Wallace Brand."

The distance was a three-minute run in his car. A large number of other cars had preceded his, and there was a throng of citizens on the platform, many of them women.

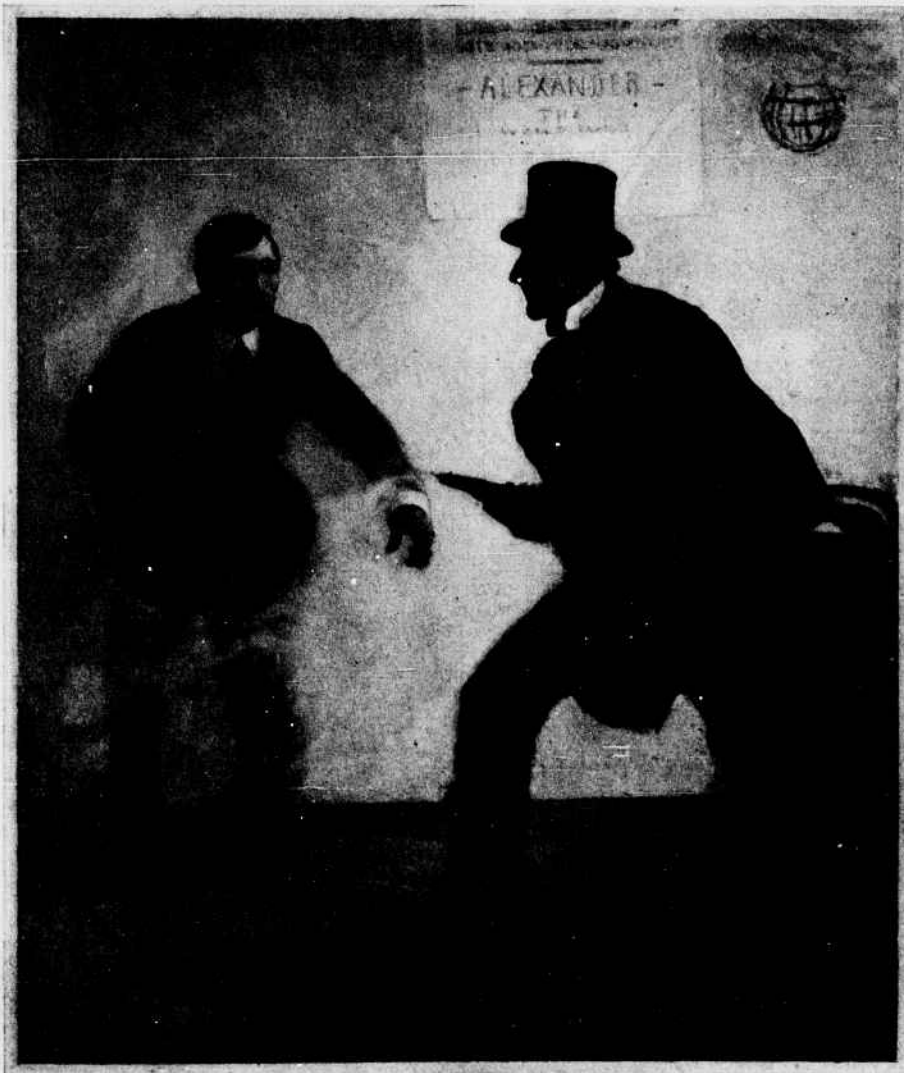
The train drew in. As the passengers filed out, Junius Crowe was conscious of a constriction about his heart. Facing all these friends would be no easy ordeal for the proud-spirited ex-convict. Then old Fritz Brand appeared in the gangway, plucking excitedly at his flowing whiskers, and behind him came a tall, broad-shouldered young man of thirty-eight, wearing a neat suit of checks and a straw hat. His hair was slightly grayed above the temples. Yet a deep contentment shone from his eyes.

Judge Crowe sprang forward to grasp his hand. The next instant he paused, with an involuntary exclamation. Brand had turned to assist a young woman down the steps. The woman was Vivian Clapsaddle Brand.

It was not age or grief, but a chastened, unlike spirituality in her face that at first had tricked Crowe's eyes. Beautiful she still was, but it was now the beauty of the lambent moon, not the noon-day sun. On the bottom step she paused just an instant and glanced at the crowd with timorous eyes, as if realizing that this welcome was not for her—as if feeling that once more it was her fate to set Loganstown agog. Then, spying Judge Crowe, she smiled through quick tears, and a moment later kissed him on the cheek, as if he were her father. She was still under twenty-five.

There was some delay over the baggage, and the two men had a moment together.

"She waited for me five years, June, and expected to wait ten or more," said Brand, with lustrous eyes. "She lived near the prison, and every Sunday afternoon for five years—expecting it to be ten or more, remember—she visited me. That is love, man. Without it that prison would have rotted my soul, and I should have come out human scrap. Now we are going to begin life over again; and, June, we're as excited as two kiddies waiting for Christmas Eve."



"Brand advanced a step, still with empty hands, and Alexander opened fire. He fired three times."

"You are due at the court-house now." He accompanied me for a couple of blocks. But he didn't deceive me. He's not the kind that gives up. I suspected he had a plan in which he did not want or could not expect my assistance. But I had to go to court, and after pressing him as hard as I dared to come with me, I left him.

WHAT happened came out at his trial. He bought a .38 caliber automatic pistol and a box of cartridges. He loaded the weapon in a telephone-booth. He then returned to the theater, and, not seeing Alexander, passed through the auditorium to the stage. Alexander, with a quartette of assistants, was rehearsing a new feature.

Alexander, whenever he put her into the long sleeps, always told her in a whisper, so the audience couldn't hear, to answer to my voice. He never done it with these piano stunts, but I think I can wake her."

"Come and try it, then," said Brand. They went out to the vestibule. The under-study approached the piano and laid his hands on Vivian's.

"Stop playing, Vivian! Wake up!" he commanded in a shaky voice.

He testified in court that he was afraid she would fail to respond and that Brand would kill him too. But her fingers instantly stopped, and she looked at the two men with bewildered eyes. Doubtless the premature awakening, and by another than Alexander, confused her.

"Is it time for the show?" she asked.